Introduction

Since the early stages of the inception of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) the EU had to face difficult issues of contested statehood that resulted from the collapse of former-Yugoslavia. The re-launch of European integration in the post-Maastricht era moved the attention of European studies beyond the borders of the EU and a number of scholars started focusing on the projection of EU power to its ‘near abroad’. As with studies on internal matters of European integration, the centrality of the Westphalian state within EU affairs has resulted in an increasing focus on states: early studies on the EU and member states have been complemented by works on EU and third countries, such as candidates for EU membership or countries that aspire to a closer relationship with the EU. Yet, the engagement of the EU in conflict or post-conflict regions in the wider European periphery and the southern Mediterranean has confronted policy makers in Brussels with a significant number of cases of ‘contested statehood’: self-declared states that lack diplomatic recognition, cannot maintain effective control over their respective territory and cannot exercise their authority due to weak state institutions (Papadimitriou and Petrov 2012: 749).

Towards a definition of contested statehood

The current literature offers a diverse range of terms to describe entities that have achieved some level of independence from their ‘parent’ state, but lack all the attributes of a fully-fledged state. The issue of international recognition is central to this debate. Bacheli et. al. (2004) and Caspersen and Stansfield (2011: 3) have coined the term “de facto state”, referring to entities that, despite their self-rule in the territories they control (and their expressed goal of securing de jure independence), their full membership of the UN is blocked as a result of a diplomatic impasse. Diplomatic contestation over the formal recognition of statehood is also a key feature in the works of Kolossov and O’Loughlin (1998) and Kolsto (2006) who speak of “pseudo-states” and “unrecognized quasi-states” respectively. Geldenhuys (2009), on the other hand, uses interchangeably the terms “non-recognized” and “contested” states to describe entities (including Kosovo) whose sovereignty suffers from incomplete international legitimacy.
Drawing on the work of Jackson (2000) on ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ sovereignty and contrasting contested statehood to understandings of what constitutes a state, Kyris and Bouris (under review) identify two main aspects of contested statehood:

a) **lack of negative sovereignty**: this *sine qua non* characteristic of contested statehood, refers to the lack of *de jure* recognition of the self-declared state by a significant part or the whole of the international community (in the form of full UN membership). Often resulting in extensive international isolation, the non-recognition of a contested state should not be confused with the recognition of the right to statehood, what Geldenhuys (2009: 25) calls ‘titular’ recognition.

b) **lack of positive sovereignty**: oppositely, lack of positive sovereignty refers to the incomplete control of the state authority over the territory it claims. Here, issues like the weak state apparatus and/or ineffective control over the territory have been widely discussed in reference to ‘weak’, ‘failed’ 'fragile' etc. states, particularly in the region of Africa (e.g. Migdal, 1988).

The distinction between ‘external’ and ‘internal’ sources of contestation to independent statehood is also central to the work of Kranser (2001). His concept of “problematic sovereignty” is articulated by reference to four distinct attributes (2001: 2, 6-12): the presence of a governing authority able to exercise effective control over the territory (*domestic sovereignty*); the ability of the government to control trans-border activities (*interdependence sovereignty*); international legal recognition (*international legal sovereignty*); and autonomy of domestic governing structures, from any authoritative external influence (*Westphalian sovereignty*). Entities suffering “problematic sovereignty” may possess some elements of the above attributes, but would either completely lack some of them (e.g. international recognition), exhibit serious limitations in all of them or exhibit any combination of these two possibilities.

Papadimitriou and Petrov (2012: 749) have sought to define ‘contested statehood’ as a state of affairs where one or more of the following characteristics hold true:

- An internationally-recognised state authority (as expressed by full membership of the UN) cannot maintain effective control over its respective territory (or parts of), either as a result of an ongoing conflict or its profound disconnection with the local population.

- The *de facto* governing authority of a contested territory has declared independence, but it does not command full diplomatic recognition by the international community as expressed by full membership of the UN.

- The capacity of an internationally-recognised or a *de facto* government to exercise authority is severely compromised due to the weakness of its state apparatus; either because of poor resources or complications in the constitutional arrangement underpinning its operation.

The above definition is by no means foolproof. We encourage contributions that challenge its premises and/or that seek to expand its empirical applicability and analytical robustness.

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Understanding the EU’s influence in its near abroad: Europeanisation, contested statehood and EU actorness

The increasing breadth (in terms of policy instruments) and reach (in terms of the number of countries affected) of the EU’s engagement with its ‘near abroad’ has fuelled a burgeoning literature on the projection of EU power. A number of concepts have been deployed in order to frame the essence of this process. Some have sought to conceptualise it as exporting Europeanisation beyond the territorial confines of the EU (Grabbe, 2001; Fischer et al. 2002; Papadimitriou and Phinnemore, 2004, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005, Bauer et. al., 2007, Börzel 2011, 2012, Noutcheva and Duzgit 2012). Others have argued of a process of external governance, that is the ability of the EU to project certain aspects of its own governance regime to its neighbours (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004; Lavenex, 2004, 2011; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009; Dimitrova and Dragneva, 2009). Underlying both perspectives is the centrality of the EU’s conditionality strategy (as a system of rewards and threats) in the various frameworks of its external relations as a means of exerting pressure on third countries to internalise EU norms/rules (Smith, 2001; Youngs, 2001; Schimmelfennig, 2005; Warkotsch, 2006; Sasse, 2008, Cengiz and Hoffmann, 2013).

Indeed, the understanding of EU influence as a process of rule-transfer inspired by the projection of the *acquis communautaire* provides important insights into the evolving architecture of the European Union’s relations with its ‘near abroad’. Its relevance, however, can be questioned in cases where the legitimacy of the EU’s official interlocutors is contested on the ground or where the state apparatus of the partner country is so weak that is unable to oversee the transfer of such rules. Neither are EU demands always articulated and communicated in a coherent manner. The issue of ‘EU actorness’ is crucial in this regard. The literature has so far sought to address the nature of international EU activism by reference to a diverse set of characteristics, including: the “variable and multidimensional presence” and the respective impact that this produces in international politics (Allen and Smith, 1990: 20); the distinctive contribution the EU makes to the functioning of the international system (Hill, 1993); the importance of defining EU foreign policy identity as being distinct from that of its member states (Zielonka, 1998) or the possession of state-like characteristics such as autonomy/sovereignty within the system, distinctiveness/delimitation from other actors, legal personality, capability to negotiate and pursue diplomatic activities, etc. (Sjostedt, 1977; see also Taylor, 1982).

Bretherton and Vogler (1999, 2006) have defined EU actorness as the intersection of three key themes: opportunities, presence and capabilities. *Opportunities* signify the structural context in which EU actions unfold where mostly external factors are instrumental in constraining or enabling EU actorness. The notion of *presence* points to the importance attached to the EU by third actors, thus shaping their expectations of what the EU should and could do. The issue of *capabilities* relates to the EU’s capacity to formulate effective policies, employ adequate policy instruments and maintain a good level of coherence between institutions in a number of overlapping policy areas.

Bretherton and Vogler’s framework of analysis offers a useful resource for the study of the EU’s response to flashpoints in its near abroad driven by competing claims to statehood. By virtue of their proximity to the EU, these crises open windows of opportunity for EU action, albeit such activism is often shared with other major international actors such as NATO, the OSCE and the UN. At a different level, however, such conflicts underline harshly competing visions of EU *presence*. These are primarily linked to what third parties expect/wish the EU would do on issues of international recognition and/or conflict prevention. *Presence* may also involve an important internal (to the EU) dimension; that is how the EU itself sets the limits of its own actorness and understands its role in conflicts around it. This is
often a process involving delicate inter-institutional and inter-governmental dynamics. This self-ascribed presence is also crucial for how the EU decides to deploy its capabilities on the ground. Depending on the nature of the conflict involved, such decisions may result in the mobilisation of EU resources across a diverse range of policy instruments and the coordination of a large number of policy stakeholders, both at the EU and the national level.

The question of ‘actorness’ is a fundamental dimension of the EU’s involvement in conflict resolution. Indeed the latter has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention (e.g. Tocci and Kovziridze 2004; Williams 2004; Nodia 2004; Tocci 2008; Seceriu 2011), with significant contributions both in terms of the ‘projection’ of European integration in conflict zones (i.e. Coppieters et al. 2004; Diez et al. 2008) or the internalisation of EU demands by those involved in competing statehood claims (e.g. Vahl and Emerson 2004; Bieber 2011; Borzel 2011, Papadimitriou and Petrov 2012, Bouris 2012, 2014). Yet, despite the wealth of empirical contributions in this field, the question of contested statehood and its implications for the EU’s external projection has been largely under-theorised. Hence, the workshop invites contributions which seek to bridge the gap between three important bodies of literature (on Europeanisation, contested statehood, and EU actorness in conflict resolution/state building) which don’t always appear to ‘speak’ to one another. In doing so, the workshop aspires to engage critically with the existing state, but also shape future research agendas which as illuminate further the EU’s interaction with its ‘near abroad’.

**Empirical Foci and Potential Contributions**

Throughout the years, the EU has deployed different tools, policies and mechanisms in order to enhance its state-building role across the world as a way of addressing the contested statehood situations that arose both in its territory and in its near abroad. Those include:

a) its **enlargement policy** (i.e. the Greek-Cypriot part of Cyprus became an EU member state, Bosnia, Kosovo are considered potential candidates and Serbia and FYR Macedonia are now official candidates);

b) the launch of the **European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)** in 2004 which has helped the EU integrate its relations with 16 ‘near neighbourhood countries’ under a single framework, by enhancing their economic and political co-operation and introducing specific, tailor-made and strict conditionalities (e.g. Occupied Palestinian Territories, Azerbaijan – Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia – Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Moldova – Transinstria);

c) the deployment of **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)** missions which generally focus on different aspects of civilian crisis management (e.g. Bosnia, Georgia, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, OPT, Serbia);

d) ‘high politics’ diplomatic activity for conflict mediation/resolution and state recognition (e.g. Montenegro and, more recently, in the context of the Arab Spring and the Ukraine);

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2 The Western Sahara, itself a case of contested statehood, is a special case in this context. While not officially targeted by the ENP, the recently adopted “New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood” addresses it explicitly and acknowledges that the current status continues “to affect sizeable populations, feed radicalisation, drain considerable local and international resources, and act as powerful impediments to reform” (COM 2011 (303)).
e) and ‘top-down state-building’ policies where the EU takes over the administration of a country and exercises directly executive powers (e.g. Bosnia and Kosovo) (Papadimitriou and Petrov 2012; Bouris 2014).

The workshop welcomes both theoretical and empirical papers that consider the EU’s role as a state-builder or conflict resolution provider in all cases mentioned above. The papers may address some of the following topics:

1. Theoretical papers on how we could conceptualize the EU’s role in cases of contested statehood in its ‘near abroad’ as well as notions of EU actorness and presence in the neighbourhood and how these shape EU foreign policy behaviour.
2. Papers focusing on the deployment of different EU state-building tools, policies and mechanisms in order to address contested statehood cases in its ‘near abroad’ such as the enlargement policy, the ENP, CSDP missions, ‘high politics’ diplomatic activity and ‘top-down state-building’.
3. Empirical case studies from the EU’s engagement in its ‘near abroad’.
4. Papers that focus on the Inter- and intra-institutional dynamics of EU policy making that impact on the EU’s external projection.

Successful papers for the workshop will be selected on the basis of their quality and the extent to which they contribute to the geographical balance of our coverage as well as the articulation of horizontal (and institutional) issues and the shed more light into the EU’s engagement in this policy field.

**Bibliography**


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